



Student Achievement in South Carolina

2008 School and District Report Card Data Brief

The rating system is built upon an aspiration that SC's student achievement is to be ranked in the top half of states nationally by 2010.

THE EIGHTH ANNUAL SCHOOL AND DISTRICT RATINGS are released at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, February 20, 2009. These ratings, developed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Accountability Act of 1998, document South Carolina's efforts to improve the performance of its students and schools.

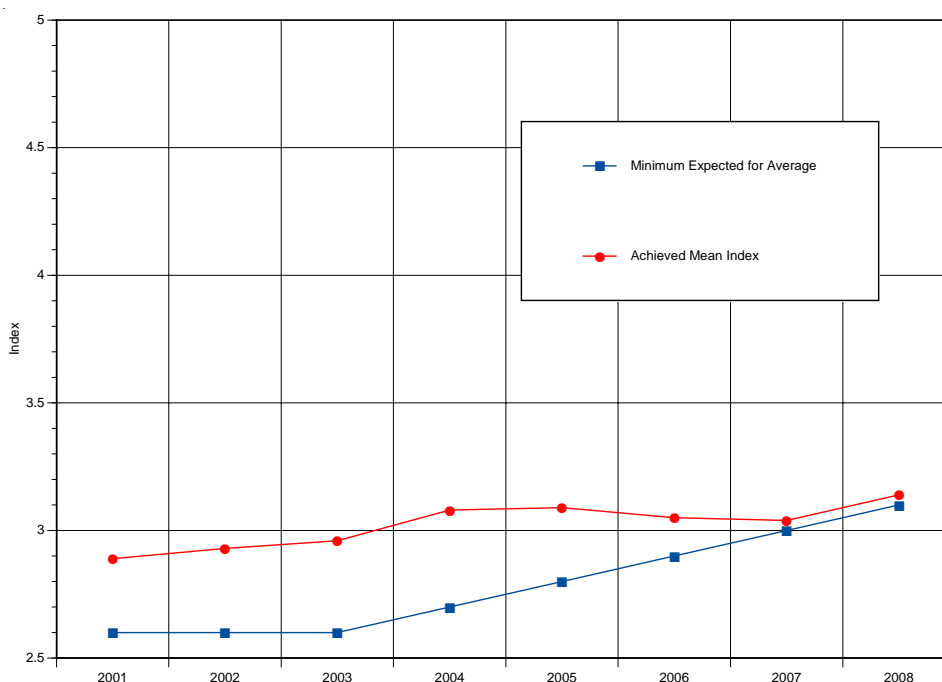
Generally, the ratings demonstrate our progress to achieve at nationally comparable levels. The rating system is built upon an aspiration that South Carolina's student achievement is to be ranked in the top half of states nationally by the year 2010.

This year's performance for elementary and middle schools is influenced by improvements in all subject areas measured by the state testing program, the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT).

At the high school level we experienced improvements in graduation rate, performance on the High School Assessment Program (HSAP), and end-of-course assessments. Consequently, ratings for high schools show an increase from previous years.

As we remain focused on building upon improvements and reaching our goal, we are committed to increasing the impact of the accountability system by implementing the changes to the system called for by the 117th South Carolina General Assembly. Changes to rating terms and reporting formats have been included in this year's release. The incorporation of a new assessment for grades 3 through 8 -- the Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS) -- involves changes to student performance levels and the ratings designations. Next year's report cards will be issued in February 2010.

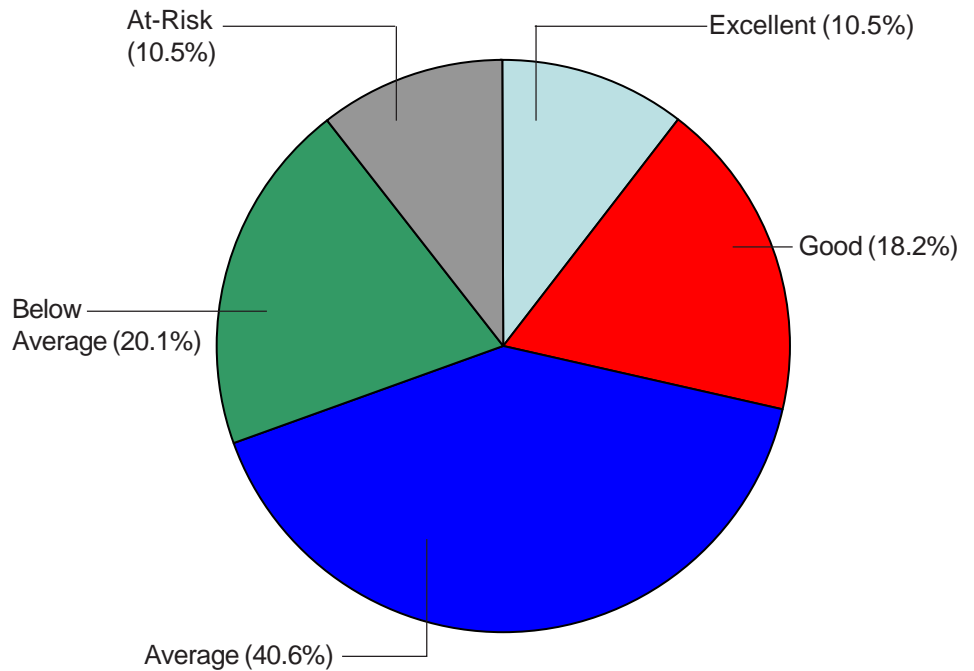
Historical Analysis of Minimum Expected Index for determining an Absolute Rating of Average vs. Achieved Mean Index



Year	Minimum Expected for Average	Achieved Mean Index
2001	2.6	2.89
2002	2.6	2.93
2003	2.6	2.96
2004	2.7	3.08
2005	2.8	3.09
2006	2.9	3.05
2007	3.0	3.04
2008	3.1	3.14

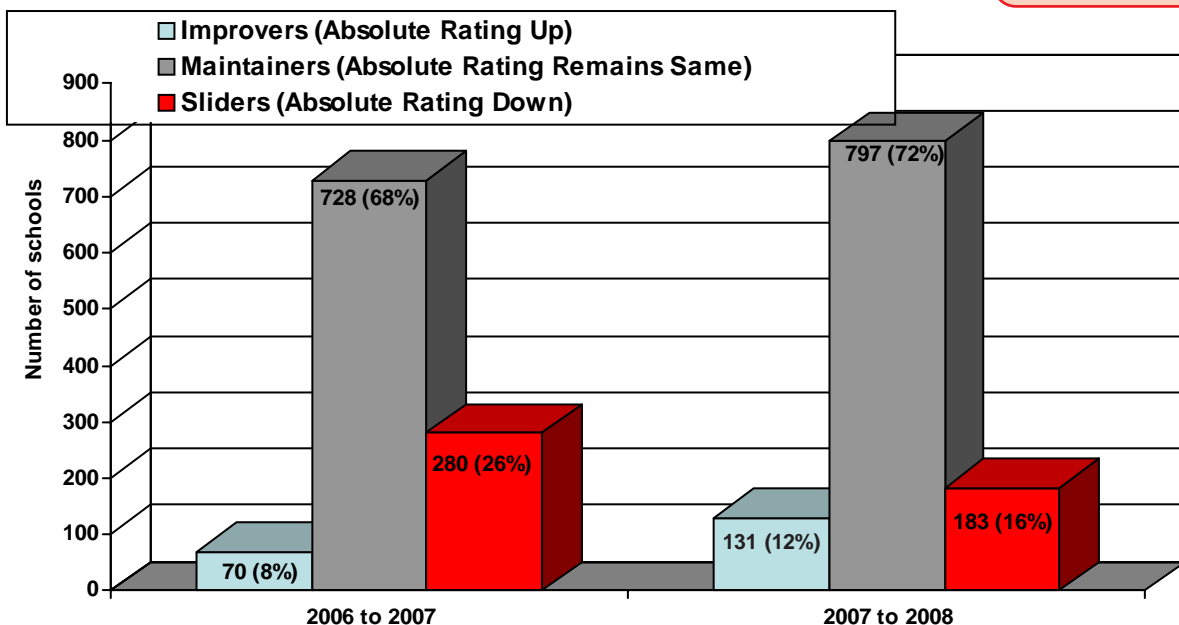
SC student enrollment by 2008 School Rating

Over 69% of South Carolina's students are enrolled in a school rated *Average* or above.



SC Schools: "Improvers", "Maintainers", and "Sliders"

In 2008, twelve percent of schools increased their rating, up from six percent in 2007.



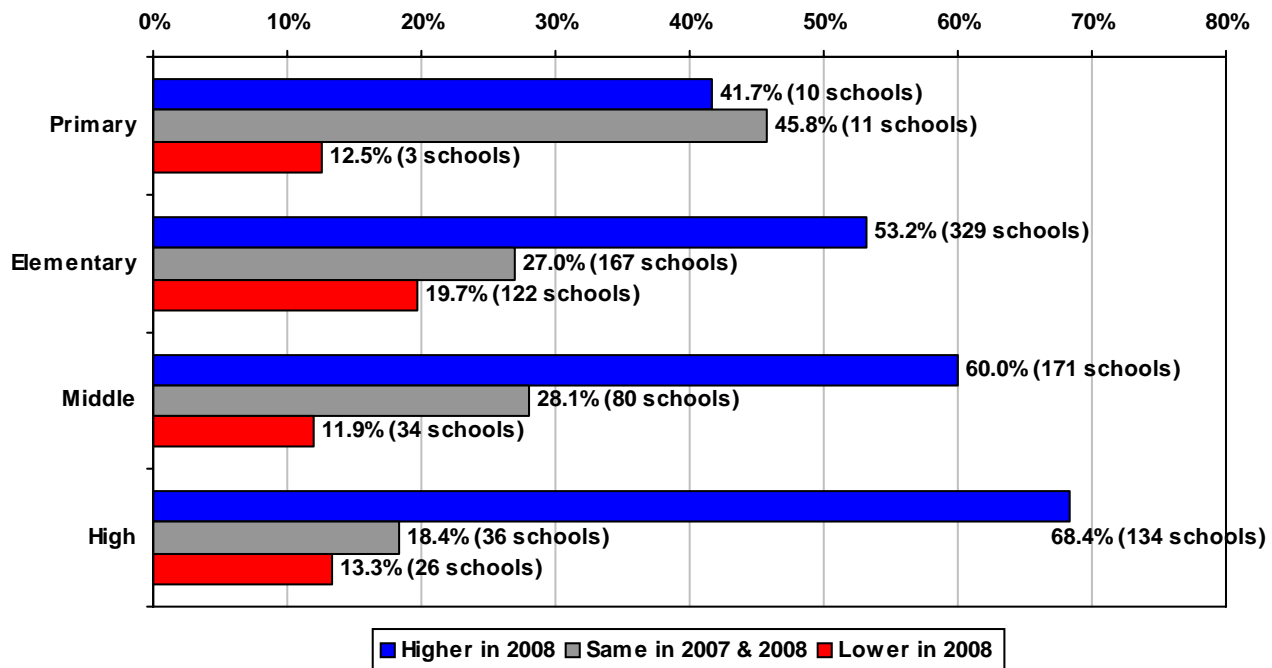
The indexes indicate improvement in student and school performance

Why It Matters: Student performance is improving overall as over 50 percent of elementary, middle, and high schools earned higher Absolute indexes in 2008 than 2007.

Key Findings: Absolute indexes determine the Absolute rating for schools. Statewide, 57 percent of schools earned a higher Absolute index up from 37 percent in 2007. Twenty-six percent maintained the same index; and 16 percent lowered their index, down from 31 percent in 2007.

In some cases, the index is higher but not high enough to earn a higher rating. A total of 329 elementary schools (53.2%) earned a higher index in 2008 than 2007. Additionally, 171 middle schools (60.0%) and 134 high schools (68.4%) earned a higher index in 2008.

Comparison of Absolute Indexes in 2007 & 2008



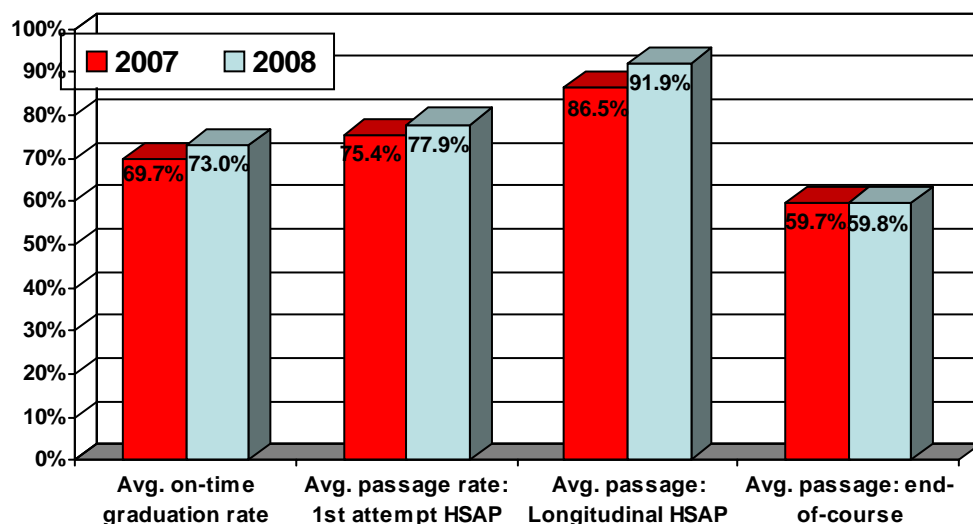
High school ratings are higher because student performance in high schools is higher.

Why It Matters: Young people who do not complete high school are unprepared to remain competitive in a global economy and earn significantly less over their lifetimes. Studies have found that young adults with low education and skill levels are more likely to live in poverty and to receive government assistance.¹ High school dropouts are likely to stay on public assistance longer than those with at least a high school degree. Further, those without a high school degree are more likely to become involved in crime.²

The Absolute and Growth ratings for high schools are calculated on a weighted model using the following criteria: performance on the High School Assessment Program (HSAP) for students taking the test for the first time; longitudinal HSAP performance; the percentage of end-of-course tests administered at the school having scores of 70 or above; and on-time graduation rate.

Key Findings: The ratings are an accurate reflection of student performance and the system. It is encouraging to see 2008 performance increase from 2007 on each measure considered in the calculation of high school ratings. Additionally, the achieved mean absolute index for high schools is 3.34, up from 3.13 in 2007.

Average school performance on criteria factored into High school Absolute ratings, 2007 and 2008*



* Analysis based on school report card data received from the SCDE, August 2008 and February 2009. For comparison purposes, only schools with report cards issued in both 2007 and 2008 are included in the analysis.

¹Source: Boisjoly, J., Harris, K., and Duncan, G., 1998. "Initial Welfare Spells: Trends, Events, and Duration," *Social Service Review*, 72 (4), 466 - 492; Moore, K., Gleib, D., Driscoll, A., Zaslow, M., and Redd, Z. (in press). "Poverty and Welfare Patterns: Implications for Children," *Journal of Social Policy*.

²Source: Freeman, R. (1996). "Why Do So Many Young American Men Commit Crimes and What Might We Do About It?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10(1), 25 - 42.

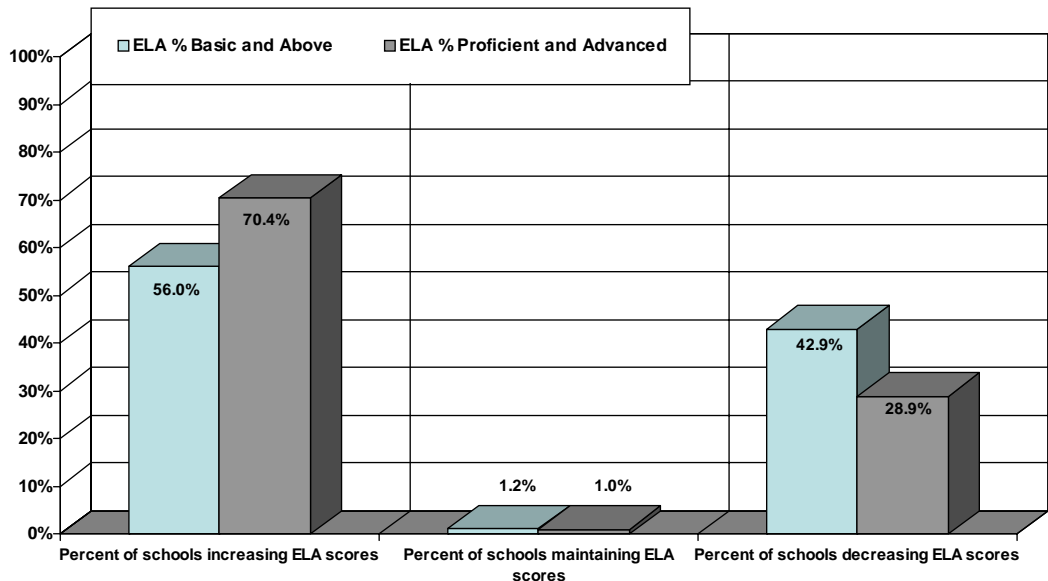
PACT performance is up for all subject areas tested but reading remains a critical academic focus area

Why It Matters: No content area is more fundamental to student success than reading. If a student cannot read on a proficient level in 8th grade, he only has a 50 percent likelihood of graduating from high school on-time.³ Early language development is key, followed by mastery of advanced comprehension skills and analytical skills.

Key Findings:

English Language Arts (ELA) PACT performance scores for all students statewide improved from 2007 to 2008. Fifty-six percent of schools saw improvements in PACT performance in ELA at the Basic and above level, compared to 42 percent of schools in 2007. At the Proficient or Advanced performance level, 70 percent of schools improved in ELA PACT performance from last year, an improvement from 45 percent the previous year.

English Language Arts (ELA) PACT Performance by school, from 2007 to 2008

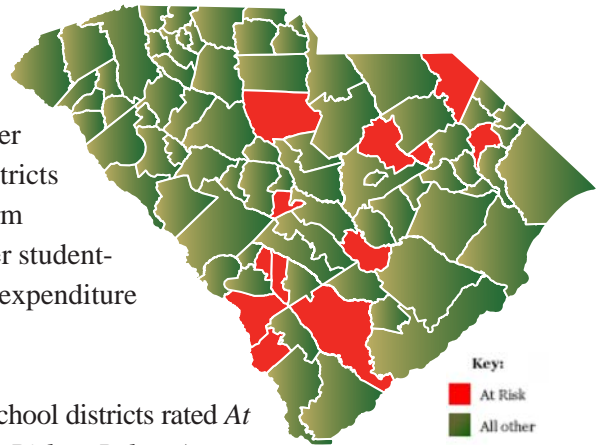


³Source: Miley, Harry (2003). "Executive Summary: The Relationship Between Reading Proficiency and High School Graduation Rates in South Carolina." http://www.scpairs.org/PDF/Harry_Miley_Exec_Summary.pdf.

Persistently underperforming schools and districts continue to struggle

2008 Districts Rated At Risk

Why It Matters: Schools and school districts in South Carolina have succeeded in making significant gains in student achievement over time. However, some schools and districts continue to struggle and under-perform despite fewer students enrolled, lower student-teacher ratios, and a higher per pupil expenditure than schools with higher ratings.



Key Findings: Eleven of the twelve school districts rated *At Risk* in 2008 have been rated either *At Risk* or *Below Average* for at least the past three years. Four districts have held this status for seven years.

Schools with lower ratings have on average:

fewer teachers with advanced degrees and more teachers with emergency or provisional certificates; fewer teachers returning from the previous year; fewer students enrolled and a lower student-teacher ratio; higher average expenditures per student; higher student retention rates and lower percentage of students eligible for gifted and talented; and lower expenditures on instruction and teachers' salaries.

School Profile	All schools (n=1148)	Schools rated Average or Above (n=682)	Schools rated Below Avg./At Risk (n=466)	Persistently low performing schools* (n=47)	Palmetto Priority schools (n=16)
Avg. percentage of teachers with advanced degrees	55.9%	57.8%	53.2%	54.3%	58.3%
Avg. percentage of teachers with emergency or provisional certificates	5.2%	3.6%	7.4%	18.8%	20.3%
Avg. percentage of teachers returning from previous year	84.0%	86.2%	80.9%	73.2%	73.1%
Avg. teacher salary	\$45,247	\$46,000	\$44,113	\$43,103	\$44,183
Avg. number of students enrolled	629.6	735.1	475.2	436.7	475.2
Avg. student-teacher ratio	19.8	21.0	17.9	17.9	18.1
Avg. expenditures per student**	\$7,540	\$7,154	\$8,108	\$9,245	\$9,565
Avg. student attendance rate	95.9%	96.1%	95.6%	93.7%	92.3%
Avg. teacher attendance rate	94.9%	95.0%	94.8%	95.0%	95.0%
Avg. prime instructional time	89.4%	89.7%	88.9%	87.4%	86.5%
Avg. student retention rate	3.5%	3.2%	4.0%	5.6%	8.3%
Avg. eligible for gifted and talented	13.0%	16.9%	7.5%	5.0%	5.0%
Avg. spent on instruction	66.0%	66.0%	66.0%	62.7%	62.7%
Avg. spent on teacher salaries	60.8%	61.2%	60.2%	55.9%	56.3%

*Persistently low-performing schools identified in October 2008 SCDE report "Persistently Low-Performing Schools: Identification and Analysis"

**Expenditures include state and federal funds.